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February 6, 2012

The Honorable Russ Carnahan
United States House of Representatives
1710 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the “Access to Substance Abuse Treatment Act of 2012”

Dear Representative Carnahan,

On behalf of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL), I am writing to voice our support for the “Access to Substance Abuse Treatment Act of 2012.” NACDL is the preeminent organization advancing the mission of the criminal defense bar to ensure justice and due process for persons accused of crime or wrongdoing. NACDL’s 10,000-plus direct members – and 90 affiliate organizations totaling more than 40,000 attorneys – include private criminal defense lawyers, public defenders, military defense counsel, law professors and judges committed to preserving fairness and promoting a rational and humane criminal justice system.

Central to NACDL’s core mission is the goal to focus more attention on the social and economic benefits of crime prevention and alternatives to incarceration, including access to treatment for individuals with substance abuse problems. NACDL joins policymakers from across the political spectrum to advocate for reforms that ensure access to drug treatment is by request and not structured within the criminal justice system. In September 2009, NACDL released *America’s Problem-Solving Courts: The Criminal Cost of Treatment and the Case for Reform*, a comprehensive report on the nation’s problem-solving courts, with a particular focus on drug courts. The report’s most fundamental recommendation is to “address substance abuse as a public health issue – not a criminal justice issue.” By treating drug addiction as a crime, instead of as an illness, vast public resources are wasted for low-risk offenders and there is “a statistically significant risk of creating recidivism.” Instead, “[d]rug treatment should be freely available to every person addicted to drugs, not simply those who become ensnared in the criminal justice system.”

Effective federal strategies would instead democratize treatment for abusers of many commonly used drugs, encourage alternative to incarceration for drug offenses, and place a premium on cutting-edge drug-related treatment methods, all of which are advanced by the “Access to Substance Abuse Treatment Act of 2012.” We look forward to working with you to pass this well- crafted and beneficial legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Wayne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the beginning.

Lisa Wayne
President